

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
----- 094632 /44

R 221500Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3493  
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY NASSAU  
AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINGSTON 5546

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4  
TAGS: PINT, PINS, JM  
SUBJECT: TALK WITH EDDIE SEAGA

1. SUMMARY: EDDIE SEAGA, LEADER OF THE JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY (JLP), SPENT 2 1/2 HOURS WITH ME ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19 DURING WHICH TIME HE TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT THE FUTURE OF JAMAICA. ALTHOUGH ONLY FOUR DAYS HAD PASSED SINCE HIS PARTY HAD SUFFERED A DECISIVE DEFEAT AT THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLES NATIONAL PARTY (PNP), SEAGA WAS ALMOST EBULLIENT AS HE DESCRIBED HIS PLANS AND, CERTAINLY, FAR FROM SUBDUED AS HE ANALYZED THE CAUSES FOR THE SIZE OF THE PNP VICTORY. END SUMMARY.

2. UNSURPRISINGLY, SEAGA SPENT MUCH OF EARLY PORTION OF OUR CONVERSATION DESCRIBING THE TECHNIQUES USED BY THE PNP TO INSURE ITS ELECTORAL SUCCESS. THE BASIC TACTIC WAS TO PERMIT 60,000 UNANTICIPATED, MANY QUITE FRAUDULENT, PNP-CONTROLLED BALLOTS TO BE CAST. TO ACHIEVE THIS, THERE WERE ACTS OF  
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INTIMIDATION, OVER-VOTING, SWAMPING OF POLL-WATCHERS, DELAYED OPENING OF POLLS, LATE DELIVERIES OF SUPPLEMENTARY VOTING LISTS, AND EVEN DETENTION OF JLP ELECTION AGENTS -- AND TWO JLP CANDIDATES.

3. SEAGA SAID THAT THE JLP PLANS TO CHALLENGE 25

INDIVIDUAL CONTESTS BUT KNOWS THAT ONLY THREE RESULTS HAVE REALISTIC HOPE OF BEING REVERSED. RATHER, THE PURPOSE OF FILING THE ELECTION PETITIONS WILL BE TO SUBJECT THE INDIVIDUAL CONTESTS TO JUDICIAL SCRUTINY. MOREOVER, THE END IS NOT TO OVERTHROW THE RESULTS OF LAST WEEKS'S ELECTION BUT RATHER TO BRING PRESSURE ON THE RULING PARTY TO ACCEPT A JLP PROPOSAL FOR CREATION OF IMPARTIAL, INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION WHICH WILL BE FREE OF PARTISAN INTERFERENCE IN THE CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS AND ANY FUTURE REDRAWING OF CONSTITUENT BOUNDARIES. THE ELECTORAL REFORM PROPOSAL IS JUST ONE OF A PACKAGE OF EIGHT SUGGESTIONS (THE OTHERS DEAL WITH GREATER PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL OVER BUDGET, EXPENDITURE AND CONTRACTS, ESTABLISHMENT OF A POLICE COMMISSION, NON-PARTISAN DISTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT BENEFITS, INTRODUCTION OF A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVANTS, AND A REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF PERSONS DETAINED UNDER THE EMERGENCY) WHICH THE JLP HAS URGED ON THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN RESPONSE TO A POST-ELECTION REQUEST FROM PRIME MINISTER TO SUGGEST WAYS TO REDUCE TENSIONS.

4. SEAGA THEN TURNED TO THE FUTURE, CANDIDLY ADMITTING TO A SENSE OF RELIEF THAT HE WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SEEING JAMAICA THROUGH THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. HE SAID THAT THE PNP "LEFT" IS NOW IN THE FOREFRONT, AND THAT THE RULING PARTY'S MODERATES ARE "FINISHED". HE SEES POWER DEVOLVING IN DUE COURSE ON SUCH PNP RADICALS AS TONY SPAULDING, CONFIDENTIAL

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ARNOLD BERTRAM AND D.K. DUNCAN (AND LUIS CASTRIOTA WILL BE A SENATOR BEFORE LONG, HE ADDED). MANLEY HAS LONG SINCE THROWN HIS LOT IN WITH THE "RADICALS" BUT WILL SOON BEGIN TO FEEL REAL PRESSURE FROM THEM IF HE FALTERS.

5. THE RISK OF MANLEY FALTERING IS HIGH, SAID SEAGA, AND THE CAUSES LIE IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC WEAKNESS. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL FACE CONFLICTING STRAINS. FOR EXAMPLE, IT NEEDS TO MAINTAIN ORDER TO INSURE THAT THE TOURIST TRADE IS REVIVED. BUT THIS IS DEPENDENT ON THE CONTINUATION OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY (SOE) WHICH RUNS OUT AT THE END OF FEBRUARY. IN ORDER TO JUSTIFY EXTENSION OF THE SOE, AN "UPSURGE" IN VIOLENCE IS REQUIRED, AND THIS WILL HARM TOURISM. CONTRADICTIONS SUCH AS THIS WILL INEVITABLY PLACE GREAT STRAINS ON MANLEY, AND COULD CAUSE HIS FALL.

6. MOREOVER, THE NEED FOR ASSISTANCE IS MORE AND MORE PRESSING. HE NOTED THAT FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES HAD FALLEN TO A DEFICIT OF \$150 MILLION. TO THIS MUST BE ADDED THE IMPACT OF INCREASED PETROLEUM PRICES (A FURTHER OUTFLOW OF \$20 MILLION) AND SUGAR LOSSES (ANOTHER \$20 MILLION), WHICH BRING THE NET DEFICIT TO \$190 MILLION. EVEN IF TOURISM CAN BE INCREASED TO BRING IN ANOTHER \$20 MILLION NET AND THE RETURN ON BAUXITE IMPROVES (IN TERMS OF BOTH THE LEVY AND SALES) BY \$20 MILLION, JAMAICA WILL END UP WHEN IT STARTED, STILL \$150 MILLION IN THE RED. GROWTH IS NOW AT A MINUS RATE (-3 TO -5 PERCENT PER ANNUM), AND THE PICTURE GROWS BLEAKER. JAMAICA'S HOPE LIES WITH THE UNITED STATES AND ITS OTHER FRIENDS TO DO SOMETHING TO REMEDY THE SITUATION. I REMINDED SEAGA OF THE LIMITED ROLE THE UNITED STATES COULD BE EXPECTED TO PLAY IN VIEW OF TRANSITION PROBLEMS  
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PLUS THE FACT THAT WE WERE NOT GEARED UP FOR BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SUPPORT, AND EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT A CONSORTIUM APPROACH MIGHT SERVE JAMAICA'S INTERESTS BEST. SEAGA EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT IF ANY CONSORTIUM SHOULD BE PUT TOGETHER, AS A QUID PRO QUO FOR ASSISTANCE IT SHOULD REQUIRE MANLEY TO ADOPT THE BASIC REFORMS HE (SEAGA) HAD PROPOSED. IN HIS VIEW, THESE WERE ESSENTIAL TO THE PRESERVATION OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN JAMAICA. WITHOUT THEM, A SINGLE PARTY AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT WAS BOUND TO EVENTUATE.

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7. COMMENTING ON HIS OWN FUTURE AND THAT OF THE JLP, SEAGA SAID THAT HE WILL NOT LEAVE THE POLITICAL ARENA PRECIPITOUSLY BUT WISHES TO "PHASE HIMSELF OUT." RATHER THAN CARRYING A HEAVY LOAD IN PARLIAMENT HIMSELF, HE PLANS TO ADOPT A "SHADOW GOVERNMENT" APPROACH, WITH MEMBERS OF HIS PARLIAMENTARY PARTY VERSED IN THE WORKINGS OF INDIVIDUAL MINISTRIES. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE ELECTION HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT THE JLP NEEDS TO STRENGTHEN ITS ORGANIZATION AT THE GRASS-ROOTS LEVEL, AND THIS HE PLANS TO PURSUE. HIS OBJECT IS TO PREPARE THE PARTY FOR "THE NEXT MAN AND THE NEXT ELECTION". AS TO THE "NEXT MAN" AS PARTY LEADER, HE DISMISSED FORMER PRIME MINISTER HUGH SHEARER AND ALSO ONE-TIME JLP FIGURE ROBERT LIGHTBOURNE ("BOB WANTS IT, BUT HE WANTS TO LEAD ANYTHING; ANYWAY, THE YOUNGSTERS WON'T HAVE HIM.") HE THEN REVIEWED THE PARTY'S POSITION IN THE HOUSE -- "HARD, BUT NO DEPTH" -- AND IN THE SENATE -- "STRONG" -- AND SAID THAT THE OVERALL POSITION WAS NOT TOO BAD. BUT HE NEVER DID NAME A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR.  
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AS TO THE NEXT ELECTION, SEAGA ASSERTED THAT MANLEY WILL BE UNABLE TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY AND A POPULAR REACTION WILL CAUSE HIM TO FALL BEFORE THE TERM OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT ENDS.

8. COMMENT: THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION SEAGA APPEARED FAR MORE OPTIMISTIC AND CONFIDENT THAN HIS PARTY'S RECENT ELECTORAL DEBACLE MIGHT SEEM TO WARRANT. OUR REPORTS INDICATE THAT HE WAS, UNTIL HE LEFT THE FOLLOWING DAY FOR A HOLIDAY IN MIAMI, BUSY WITH PARTY AFFAIRS, CONDUCTING POST MORTEMS WITH JLP CANDIDATES, CONSULTING WITH LAWYERS ABOUT ELECTION PETITIONS AND DRAWING UP HIS PROPOSALS. DESPITE HIS UNUSUALLY CALM AND RATIONAL MANNER, HE LEFT ME WITH A SENSE OF UNREALITY. HIS PARTY HAS TAKEN A THUMPING AND ITS PROSPECTS ARE BLEAK. HIS REFORM PROPOSALS -- ALL OF WHICH POSSESS REAL MERIT -- SEEM UNLIKELY TO SPUR GENUINE INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE PNP, AND

HIS HOPE THAT PROSPECTIVE DONOR COUNTRIES MIGHT  
PRESS FOR THEIR ADOPTION, EXCEPT FOR FISCAL REFORM,  
STRIKES ME AS REMOTE. LASTLY, HIS BELIEF THAT THE  
PNP GOVERNMENT MIGHT FALL IF THE PUBLIC WERE AFFECTED  
BY ECONOMIC FAILURES SEEMS ALSO A REMOTE POSSIBILITY.  
THE PNP HAS FOUR-FIFTHS OF THE SEATS IN THE HOUSE AND  
CONTROL OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY APPARATUS, BOTH OF  
WHICH OFFER VERY CONSIDERABLE INSURANCE; THUS, I  
SEE SELECTIVE RATIONING, PRESS CENSORSHIP AND EVEN RE-  
PRESSION AS THE LIKELY RESPONSE TO DEEPER TROUBLE. (THERE  
ARE ALREADY INDICATIONS, SUCH AS THE GREATLY EXPANDED "HOME  
GUARD", THAT THINGS WILL NOT GO WELL FOR "UNPATRIOTIC"  
JAMAICANS.) WHILE I CAN CONCEIVE OF MANLEY PERHAPS  
BEING FORCED FROM OFFICE BY FAILURES OF HIS GOVERNMENT,  
WITH RESULTING FOOD SHORTAGES AND GENERAL UNREST,  
THE PRESENT PROSPECT WOULD BE FOR HIS REPLACEMENT BY  
PNP "RADICALS", PERHAPS LED BY TONY SPAULDING AS A  
FIGUREHEAD. IF I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THE PNP  
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"MODERATES" CROSSING THE HOUSE TO JOIN THE  
JLP IN ANY EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION EFFORT. THOUGH I  
AM RELUCTANT TO SUGGEST IT, HUMAN RIGHTS IN JAMAICA  
MAY EMERGE AS AN ISSUE. ON THE OTHER HAND, FOR  
THE SECOND TIME SINCE INDEPENDENCE, ALMOST UNIQUELY IN THE  
THIRD WORLD, JAMAICA HAS EFFECTED A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT  
WITHOUT A COUP USING THEIR OWN BRAND OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES.  
THE PRESSURE ON MANLEY WILL BE TO ACCELERATE CHANGE TO THE  
LEFT, AND THE PACK IS IN FULL CRY ON THE SCENT OF  
IMPERIALISM, CAPITALIST DOMINATION, AND INTERFERENCE IN  
THEIR SACRED SOVEREIGNTY. TO EXPECT MANLEY TO BE "MODERATE"  
AND "RESPONSIBLE" IS A CHIMERA. THE LEADER OF THE PACK CANNOT  
BECOME A VEGETARIAN.  
GERARD

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